

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT  
OF  
*PHILIP HOWORTH,*  
A BOY,  
IN WHOM SIGNS OF PUBERTY COMMENCED AT AN EARLY AGE.  
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*Read March 7, 1809.*

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THE histories of remarkable children have been transmitted to us from the days of Pliny the elder, who lived in the reign of Vespasian. Philemon Holland, his translator, in book vii. chap. 16, has the following observation : — “ It is well known that there be some that naturally are never but a foot and an half high ; others again somewhat longer, and to this height they came in three years, which is the full course of their age, and then they die. We read, moreover, in the chronicles, that in Salamis one Euthimenes had a son who in three years grew to be three cubits, or four feet and a half high, but

he was in his gait slow and heavy, and in his wit as dull and blockish, howbeit in this time overgrown he was, and his voice changed to be great, and at three years' end died suddenly of a general cramp."

An account \* is also given by Craterus, the brother of king Antigonus: the subject of which history was an infant, a young man, a mature man, and an old man, was married and begat children, and all in the space of seven years !

In January, 1747, Dr. Mead presented to the Royal Society the history of an extraordinary child, born at Willingham, near Cambridge, which is to be found in the Philosophical Transactions for the year 1745, vol. 43. This child, according to the relation of his historian, Thomas Dawkes, surgeon, at St. Ives, near Huntingdon, was not only remarkable on account of his bulk and height, but also for the external marks of puberty which were first observed at the age of twelve months. No evidence, however, has been given of the perfect developement of the genital organs ; their external appearance has alone been described, without any regard to the state of their functions. In an account published after the death of this boy by the same biographer, it appears, that at the age of five years

\* Κράτερος δε φησιν ὁ Ἀντιγονος τῷ Βασιλέως ἀδελφός, γινώσκειν τίνα ἀνθρωπον ὃν ἐν ἑπτα ἔτεσιν, πᾶσιδαγενέσθαι, καὶ μειράκιον, καὶ ἄνδρα, καὶ γέροντα, καὶ νήματα, καὶ παῖδο ποιησάμενον ἀποθάνειν.

*Phlegon de Mirab. cap. xxxii.*

he was attended by the late Dr. Heberden, (then resident in St. John's College Cambridge) on account of a disease resembling phthisis pulmonalis, of which he died in a few months, and as Dawkes expresses it, "he had the appearance when dead of a venerable old man."

In the early part of the month of August, 1808, I was informed of a boy in whom some remarkable changes had happened, at a very early age. His history well deserves the attention of the philosopher, and forms the subject of the present memoir.

Philip Howorth was born in Quebec Mews, Portman-square, on February 21, 1806 \*. His parents are middle aged, and poor but industrious people. The father is a coachman in a gentleman's service, and the mother is constantly employed in nursing and rearing a family of ten children, of which Philip is the ninth. The father is a healthy and muscular man; the mother a middle sized woman and rather delicate; the rest of the children are of the ordinary stature and appearance.

During the mother's pregnancy with Philip, (which continued the usual length of time) nothing occurred worthy of remark. At the birth, the head of the child was covered with a profusion of hair of a considerable length; the sutures of the cranium were closed, not leaving the smallest vestige of a

\* This information I obtained from the parish register.

fontanelle; and he was at this period considered, in point of size and appearance, as a large and healthy child. At seven months he had cut the two lower dentes incisores, and in a few months from that period he became possessed of twenty teeth. The regular order of dentition does not appear to have been observed; since, after the appearance of the two inferior incisores, all the other teeth were observed protruding through the gums at the same time, accompanied however by no inflammation of the gums, or irritability of the bowels. During his first year he was remarkably healthy, and could, at about the twelfth month, run alone. It may be here observed, that his hair had grown to a great length, and hung in curls round his forehead, and down his neck. Shortly after the completion of the first year, a very evident alteration in his appearance was observable; his countenance, which, until now, had been marked with health and infant beauty, rapidly underwent a complete change; his features lost their round and infantile form, and became long, pale, and extremely ugly, as if affected by the presence of some bodily disease. These appearances seem to have been the necessary preludes of those remarkable changes which quickly succeeded. At this period nature made a sudden bound to puberty; the penis and testes were observed to increase in size; and a small number of black curling hairs were discovered on the pubes. An evident alteration also took place in the tone of voice, his cries becoming more hoarse and interrupted.

The peculiar organic changes which have been mentioned as commencing on the completion of his first year, continued to be rapidly increased, and when the various organization which is developed at the period of puberty had become more evolved, the signs of returning health became very apparent ; the features began to assume an appearance far different from that of an infant ; and the rapid growth of the body in succession became the wonder of all who knew him. No exact admeasurement, however, had been taken of his progressive increase, and until he had nearly attained the age of two and a half years, he had engaged only the attention of their neighbours in the Mews, where he was born, and with whose children he has associated and been brought up.

It now remains for me to present to the Society that part of his history and description which has fallen under my own notice. From my repeated visits, a perfect acquaintance and familiarity with the boy has been established ; and he has been induced to visit me frequently at my own house, where, as he acts without restraint, I had most favourable opportunities of becoming acquainted with whatever is remarkable in his formation, or interesting in his natural history. On the first view of the boy, the manly character, strongly expressed in his countenance is extremely striking ; the features are rather broad, the head small, but well formed ; the eyes blue, the hair brown and coarse, the eye-brows

large, and the complexion rather brown. On viewing the body naked from the pelvis upwards, he is nearly the exact representation of the Farnese Hercules reduced. The pectoral and serrati muscles, the abdominal, and those of the neck are eminently conspicuous; the muscles of the back, and around the scapulæ, are also remarkable; the arm is truly herculean; the deltoid, when in powerful action, swells to an astonishing thickness, and its insertion is well marked; the fore-arm is muscular, the hand large, with the common integuments remarkably hard; the contour of the neck is beautiful, marking, from its formation where it joins the dorsal vertebræ, excessive strength; the chest is broad and fleshy. The lower extremities are somewhat curved, a circumstance, I imagine, occasioned by the great weight of trunk which they had to support, at a time when the bones had but little power of resistance; the muscles, however, on the thigh and leg do not correspond in size with those of the upper extremities: the foot is broad and well marked.

The throat is full, and the thyroid cartilage is large and projecting; the voice resembles that of a young man of sixteen, and he is capable of whistling very low tones; his laugh is loud, and strongly indicates the changes which have happened to the cartilages of the larynx.

The chin is without beard, but the black-headed points of steatomatous matter are observable in the

skin, which are remarkable in young men previous to the growth of beard.

The teeth, on comparing them with those of other children, are rather more distant than usual ; and here I may mention, that within the last month, all the incisores have become loose, and one has fallen from the upper jaw.

The nipple is prominent, and the areola well marked, and incircled with a small quantity of hair. The axilla is without hair, but the secretion has the peculiar characteristic odour of the adult.

The pubes and scrotum are covered with black curling hair. The penis and testes are as large as I have seen in some adults. The corpus spongiosum urethræ has outgrown the corpora cavernosa, which gives the penis a considerable curve, when in a state of erection. The testes are firm and perfect in their formation, and the chord may be distinctly felt ; the prepuce is easily drawn back over the glans, and the secretion of the glandulæ odoriferæ is apparent ; the usual brown appearance of the integuments of these parts is also here to be observed.

I have subjoined a table of admeasurement of the principal parts of the body. His height and weight I ascertained in August 1808. The dimensions, however, of the other parts were taken, with great accuracy, in January 1809.

*Dimensions of Philip Howorth, taken August 1808.*

Height .....3 feet 2 inches.

Weight .....47 pounds.

*Dimensions taken in January 1809.*

Height .....3 feet 4½ inches.

Weight .....5¼ lbs. or 3 stone 9¼ lbs.

*Inches.*

Measure round his neck .....12½

Round his cranium .....20

Round the waist.....24

From the inner edge of each glenoid cavity  
across the chest .....12

From head of humerus to wrist .....13½

Over the deltoid muscle .....9

Over the biceps.....7

Round the wrist.....6½

Length from the great trochanter to the  
anle .....17½

Round the thigh .....13½

Round the calf.....8

Length of foot.....6

Round the convex part.....6½

Length of penis, as pendent.....3

—————when erect .....4½

Circumference of penis, when erect .....4

————— of the scrotum, testes, and  
penis .....8

We naturally suppose that a just union of health and excessive growth are incompatible. The continuance, however, of perfect health, during this rapid increase of height and bulk, has been in this subject very remarkable. \*

In the history of the boy related by Pliny, he describes him as stupid and dull of intellect; the reverse of this, however, is found in this boy. His understanding seems equal to that of a child of six years old, and many of his observations and inquiries appear to have been the result of mature reflection. It must however, be observed, that his general character is marked with a considerable mixture of childish playfulness. How far he is capable of receiving scholastic instruction has not yet been ascertained. His disposition is mild, not easily provoked to anger. When, however, his rage is excited, it is not expressed in the usual manner of children, but by the lowering of the eye-brows, shaking of the head, and uplifted fist. Indeed, on all occasions the features strongly express the presence of any passion influencing the mind. He possesses very considerable strength, being able to lift a weight of forty pounds without much exertion. He has a talent for music, and sings with correctness some

\* *Minimè prætereundum est, quod hic puer virilis, masturbatione interdum utitur. Semen tali modo paratum ipse ego bis vidi; et, me iudice, perfectum et bene elaboratum evadit.—* This has taken place, the mother informs me, from the completion of the second year,

tunes learnt from the grooms in the mews where he lives. It is worthy of remark, that he retains a very close resemblance of countenance to the rest of his family, and nothing of monstrosity is to be found except the curved state of the lower extremities, the cause of which I have attempted to account for. His food has been very simple, and chiefly of the farinaceous kind; his choice, however, appears to be animal food, of which he eats enormously, and with great eagerness.

From a review of this history, I think we may safely infer, that the changes which have taken place in this boy had their origin in utero. The development of the genital and other organs after birth has been extremely rapid, but remarkable for regularity. The unhealthy age of boys which happens about the fourteenth year, was in this subject strikingly marked at the age of one year. His rapid bound to the state of puberty, and consequent restoration of health and vigour, is precisely what happens to young men on their arrival at the adult state.

From the perfect formation of parts essential to the continuance of health, a reasonable prospect is offered of this extraordinary subject arriving at a comparative maturity of years, and it is my intention to lay before this society, at particular periods, whatever may occur in his future history worthy its acceptance.